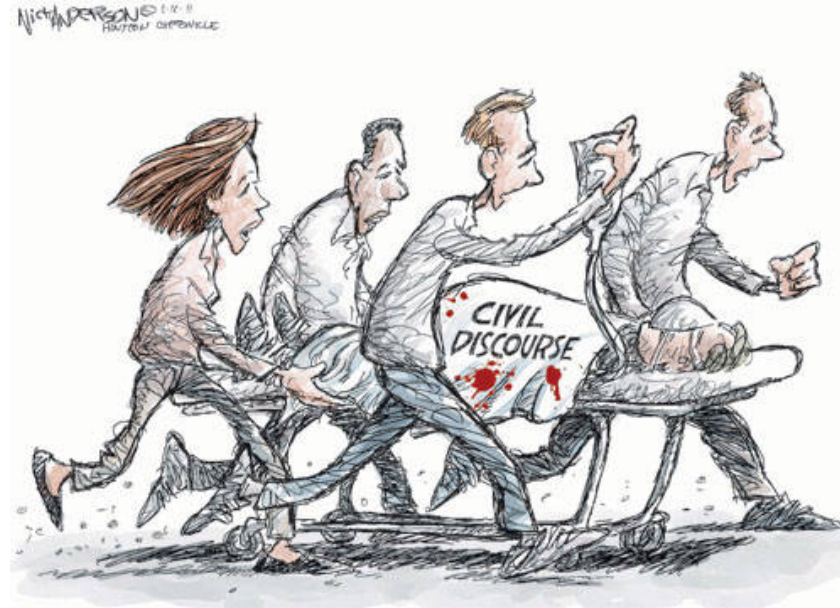


SUMMARY REPORT



SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE OF CIVIL DISCOURSE

2018



Scenarios for the Future of Civil Discourse

This report summarizes the results of the second scenario planning workshop convened by EFF, The Internet Archive, Mozilla, and Wikimedia.

The scenario planning process is iterative: the second workshop revisited and refined the scenarios that were developed in the first workshop, then distilled their overall implications– both robust (true for any/all scenarios) and contingent (dependent on the direction in which the future unfolds).

Thus, this summary is an updated/revised version of the first summary, reflecting things changed/added in the second workshop. While there are some updates to the scenario descriptions in the prior report, the primary change is in the addition of scenario-specific and overall implications.

As the group remarked in the first workshop, the likely actual future is a mix over time of elements of each of the scenarios (with, at any point in time, different scenarios characterizing different countries/regions)– that’s to say, it’ll be a roiling mix of our futures. The purpose of our exercise is both to surface the broadest range of challenges and opportunities that each organization might face, and to provide a “wind-tunnel” for strategic options—that’s to say, we are looking out into the future in order to help make better strategic decisions today.

Our scenario process began with identifying the key concerns of the sponsoring organizations– the questions for which we are solving...



Key Issues for our sponsoring organizations?

In thinking about their roles in civil discourse, our sponsoring organizations identified several challenges and opportunities between now and 2027...

▲ How do we think about “nationality”?

- Are we a truly global resource?
- Do we think of ourselves as a “U.S.” entity?

▲ What’s our role?

- How do we enable– shape?– constructive civil discourse?
- Should we be more politically active (501c4)?
- How do we help shift from “selfish” to “selfless”?

▲ Economic and Operating issues

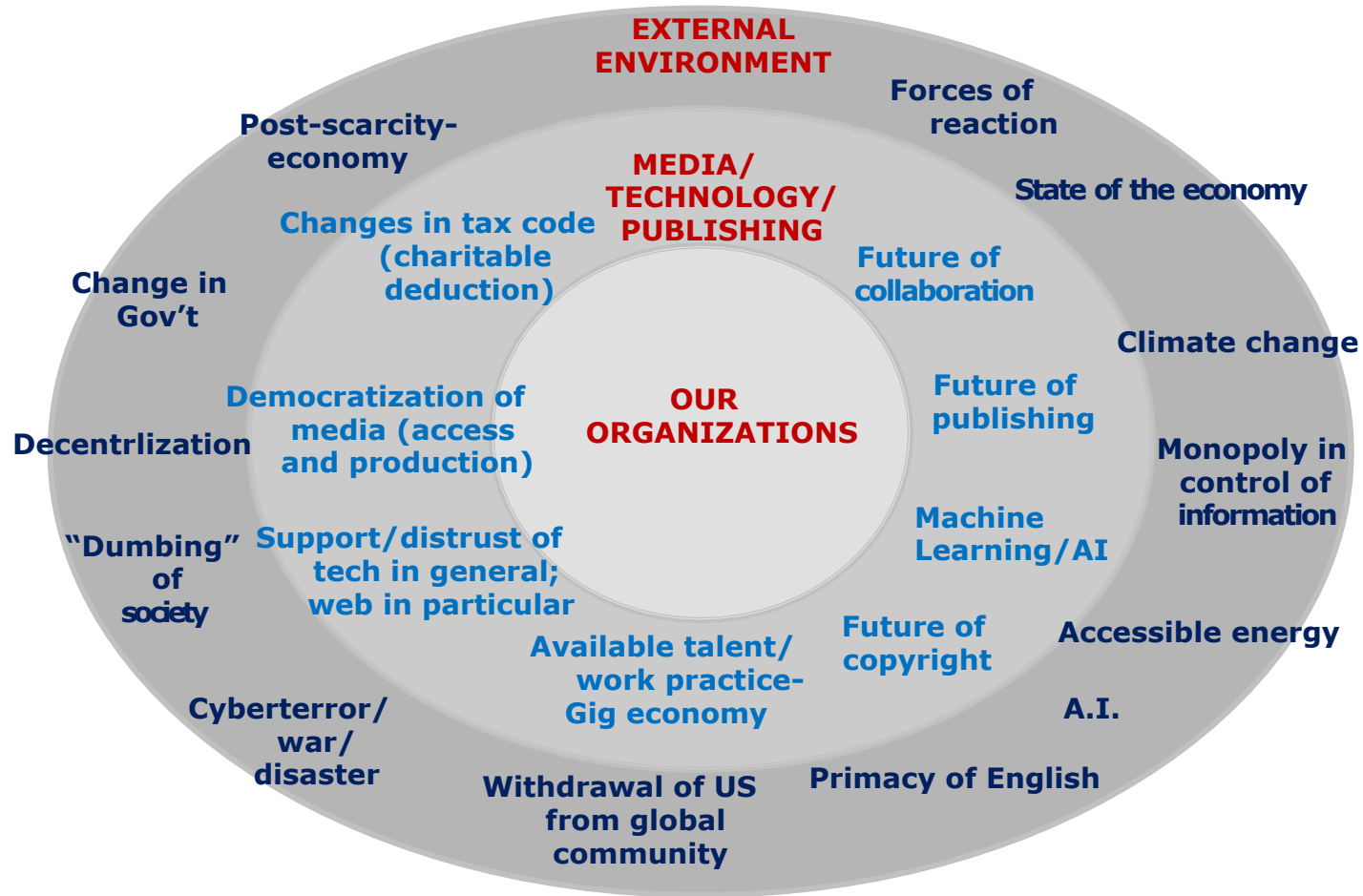
- How do we support ourselves?
- How will users interact with us? What’s the user agent of the future?
- Workforce development
- How do we steward/ manage datasets and the results of AI/machine learning?

... and many others



Driving Forces for the Future of Civil Discourse

The right– the most robust– responses to these issues will have to take into account a wide variety of uncertainties– dynamics over which these organizations have no control...

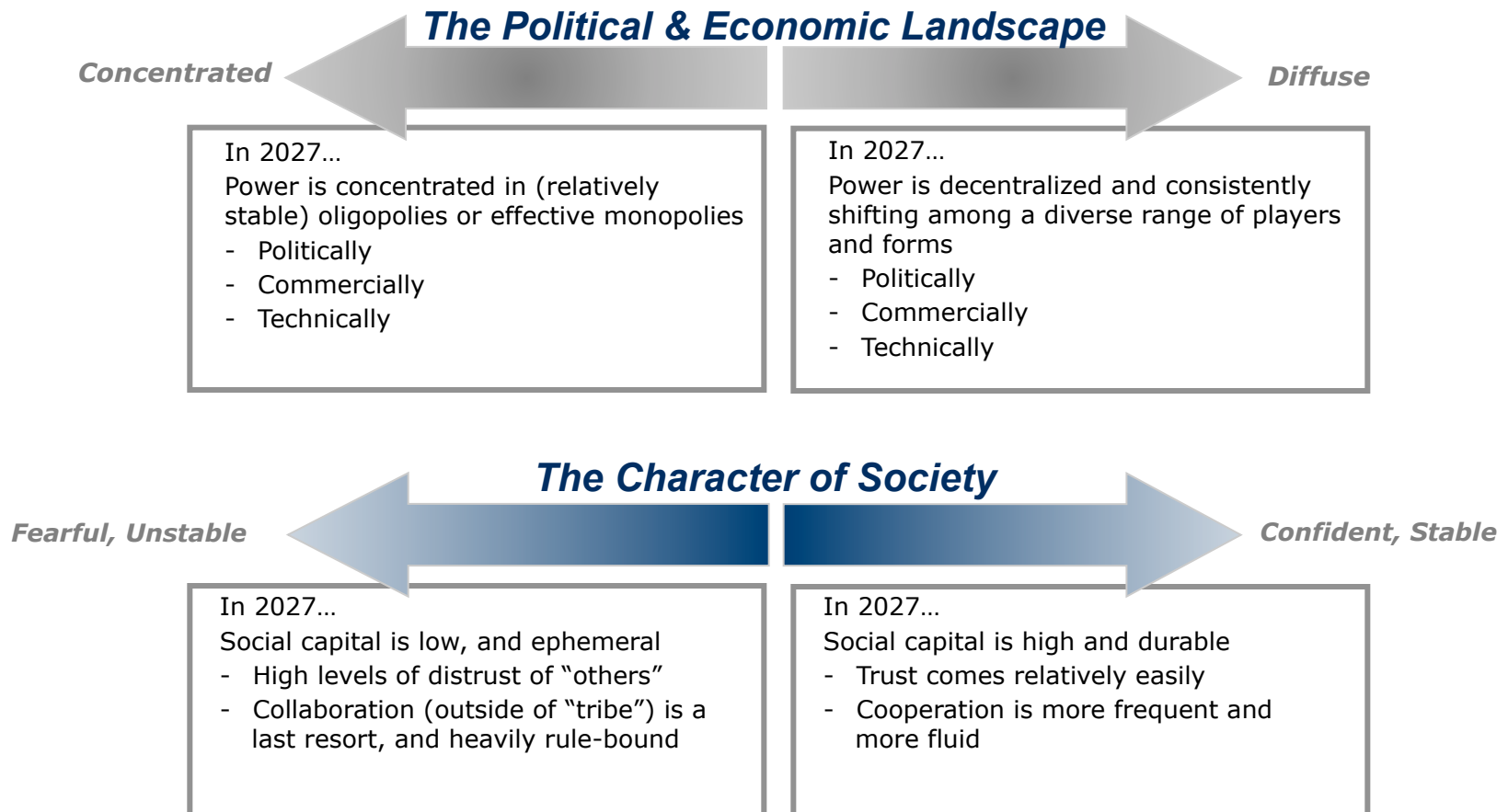


Based on a list of over 100 driving forces identified at the Scenario Development workshop. The driving forces listed above were among those identified as the most important and the most uncertain with regard to the questions on the prior page.



Scenario Logics

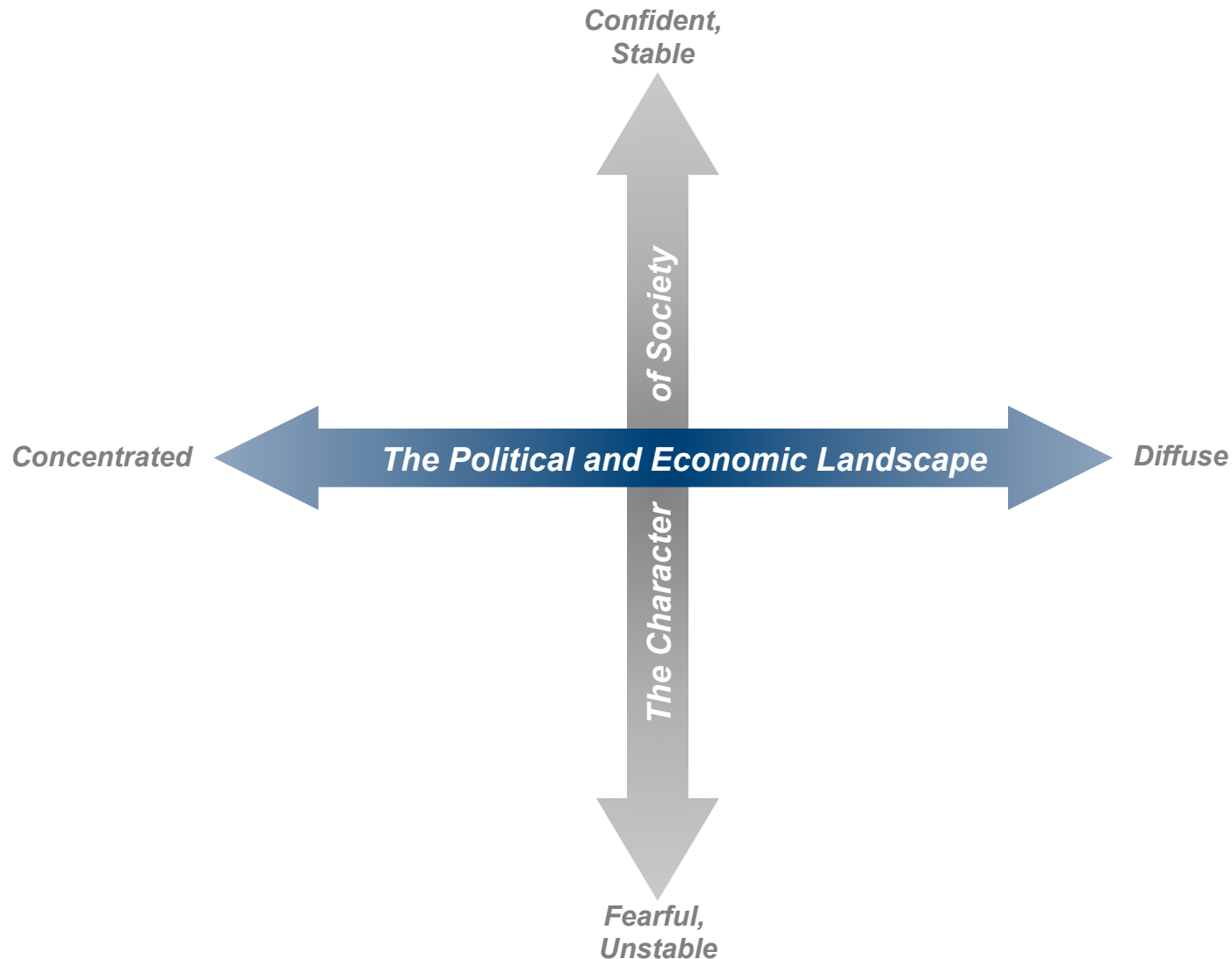
We used two uncertainties – candidates for “most important” and “most uncertain” – as the “logics” of our scenarios– the dimensions in which the alternative futures will be most different...





Scenarios for the Future of Civil Discourse

When these two fundamental uncertainties are juxtaposed, we create a framework in which we can explore four divergent futures for our organizations...





Scenarios are...

We then set about building the first drafts of our scenarios, fleshing out their stories by exploring the ways in which the driving forces we identified might play out...

Stories built around a methodically constructed plot

A tool for identifying strategic options in the face of long-range uncertainty

A framework and a vocabulary for an on-going strategic conversation

A set of good scenarios contains...

- **Plausible** stories
- **Relevant** to the question at hand
- **Divergent** from one another
- **Challenging** to our assumptions about the future



Scenarios for the Future of Civil Discourse

What follow are details of each of the four scenarios that you created. For each you will find:

- **A general account of the future**
- **A depiction of some of its salient characteristics**
- **A set of example “headlines” that one might read as a future like this unfolded**
- **A list of key themes that emerged in your conversation about that future**
- **A sample of the scenario-specific implications that you surfaced for each**

As you noted in your conversations, and as we’ll see further in this report, many of the scenario-specific implications listed in with a given scenario here apply to other scenarios as well– some, in directionally-specific ways (e.g., “this is important in the Southern scenarios in which society is fearful and untrusting”); some, in a robust way (they make sense in all scenarios).



The Long and Winding Road

Concentrated power; confident, stable social landscape



Geo-politics are relatively stable (if not entirely cordial); Nationalism is moderated

Global trade is relatively strong (though largely bi/tri-lateral)

The economy has muddled through; consolidation has proceeded steadily

Strong central governments have moved closer to corporations (privatizing, outsourcing)

Governments (and NGOs/lobbyists) join corporations in moving ever more communications and services to the ether- even as IP laws strengthened





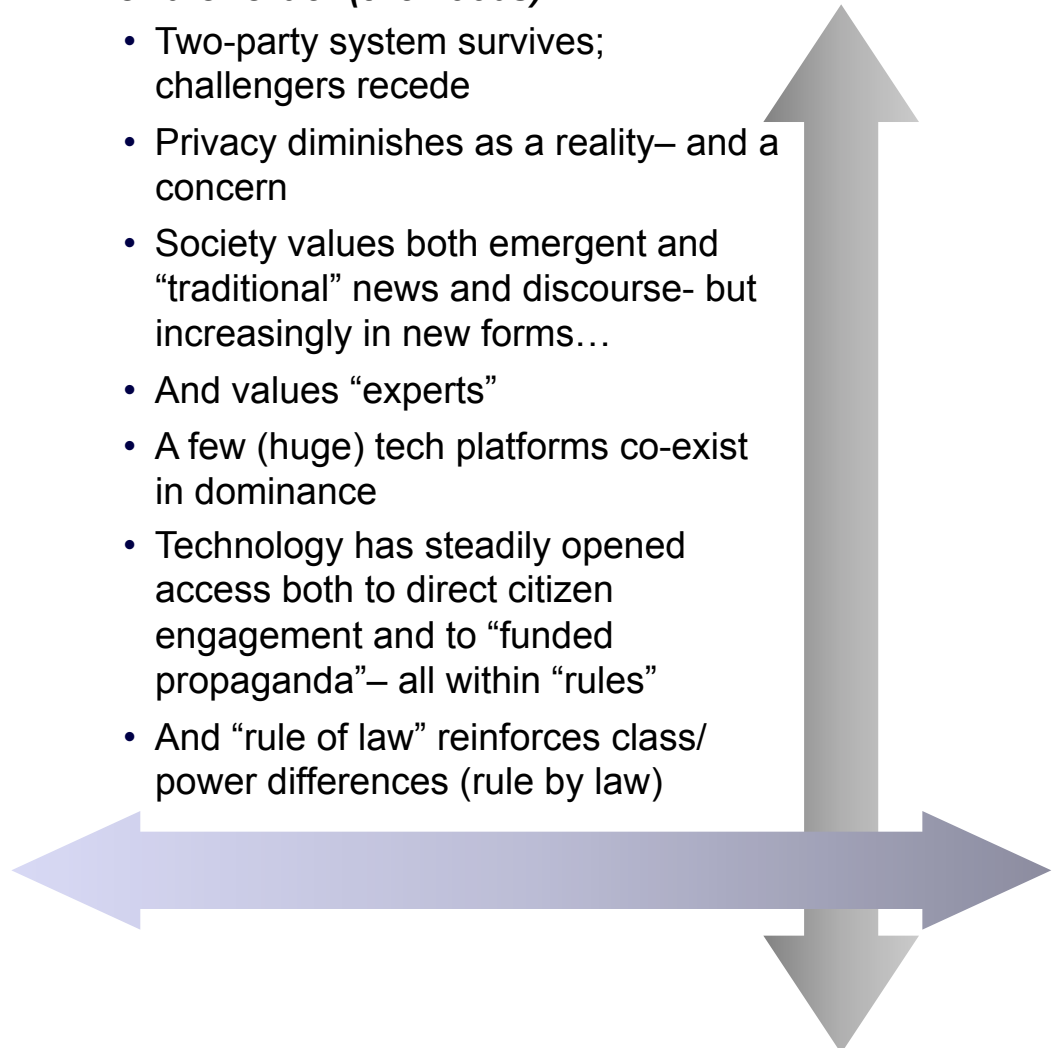
The Long and Winding Road

Concentrated power; confident, stable social landscape



A world of order (the 1950s):

- Two-party system survives; challengers recede
- Privacy diminishes as a reality– and a concern
- Society values both emergent and “traditional” news and discourse- but increasingly in new forms...
- And values “experts”
- A few (huge) tech platforms co-exist in dominance
- Technology has steadily opened access both to direct citizen engagement and to “funded propaganda”– all within “rules”
- And “rule of law” reinforces class/ power differences (rule by law)





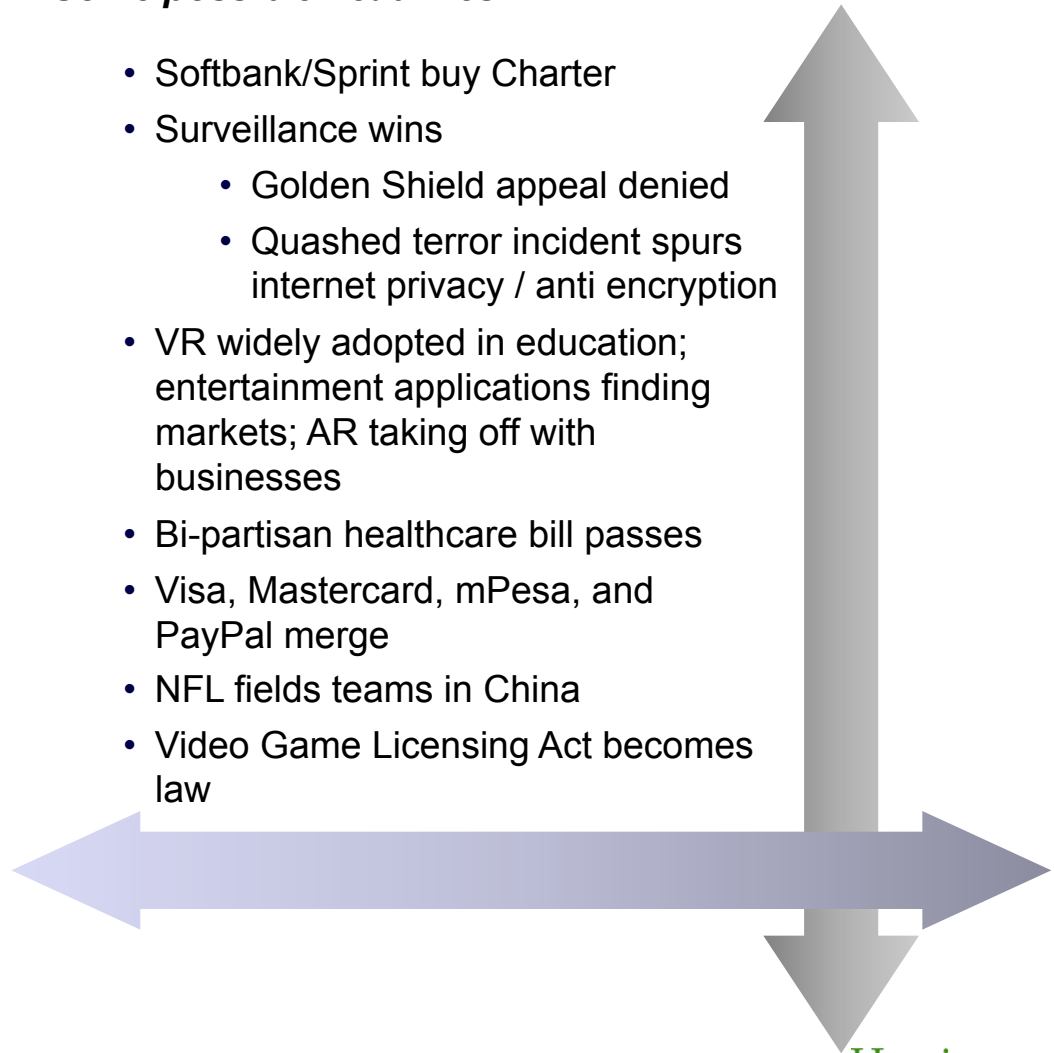
The Long and Winding Road

Concentrated power; confident, stable social landscape



Some possible headlines:

- Softbank/Sprint buy Charter
- Surveillance wins
 - Golden Shield appeal denied
 - Quashed terror incident spurs internet privacy / anti encryption
- VR widely adopted in education; entertainment applications finding markets; AR taking off with businesses
- Bi-partisan healthcare bill passes
- Visa, Mastercard, mPesa, and PayPal merge
- NFL fields teams in China
- Video Game Licensing Act becomes law





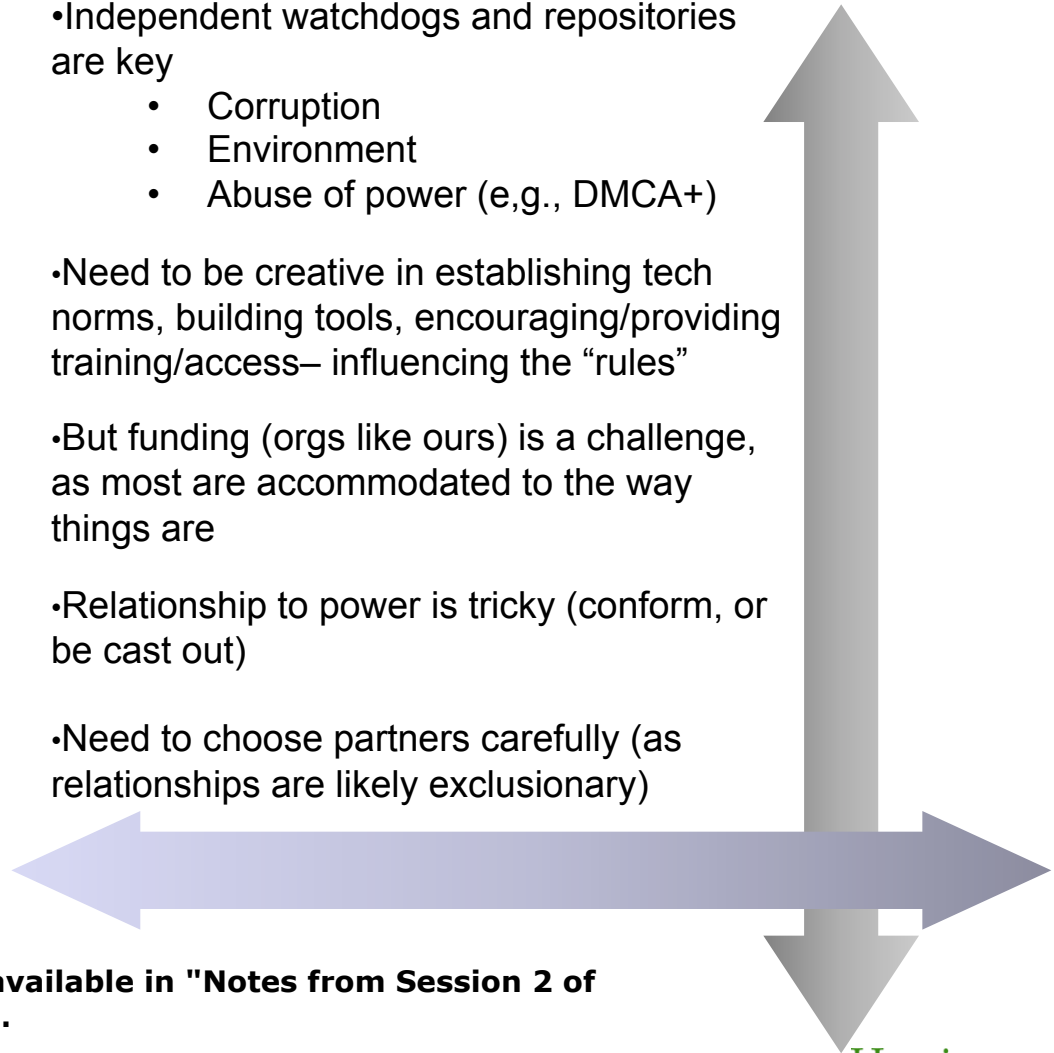
The Long and Winding Road

Concentrated power; confident, stable social landscape



Key Themes

- Independent watchdogs and repositories are key
 - Corruption
 - Environment
 - Abuse of power (e.g., DMCA+)
- Need to be creative in establishing tech norms, building tools, encouraging/providing training/access– influencing the “rules”
- But funding (orgs like ours) is a challenge, as most are accommodated to the way things are
- Relationship to power is tricky (conform, or be cast out)
- Need to choose partners carefully (as relationships are likely exclusionary)



A much more complete description is available in "Notes from Session 2 of the Civil Discourse Planning Project" ...



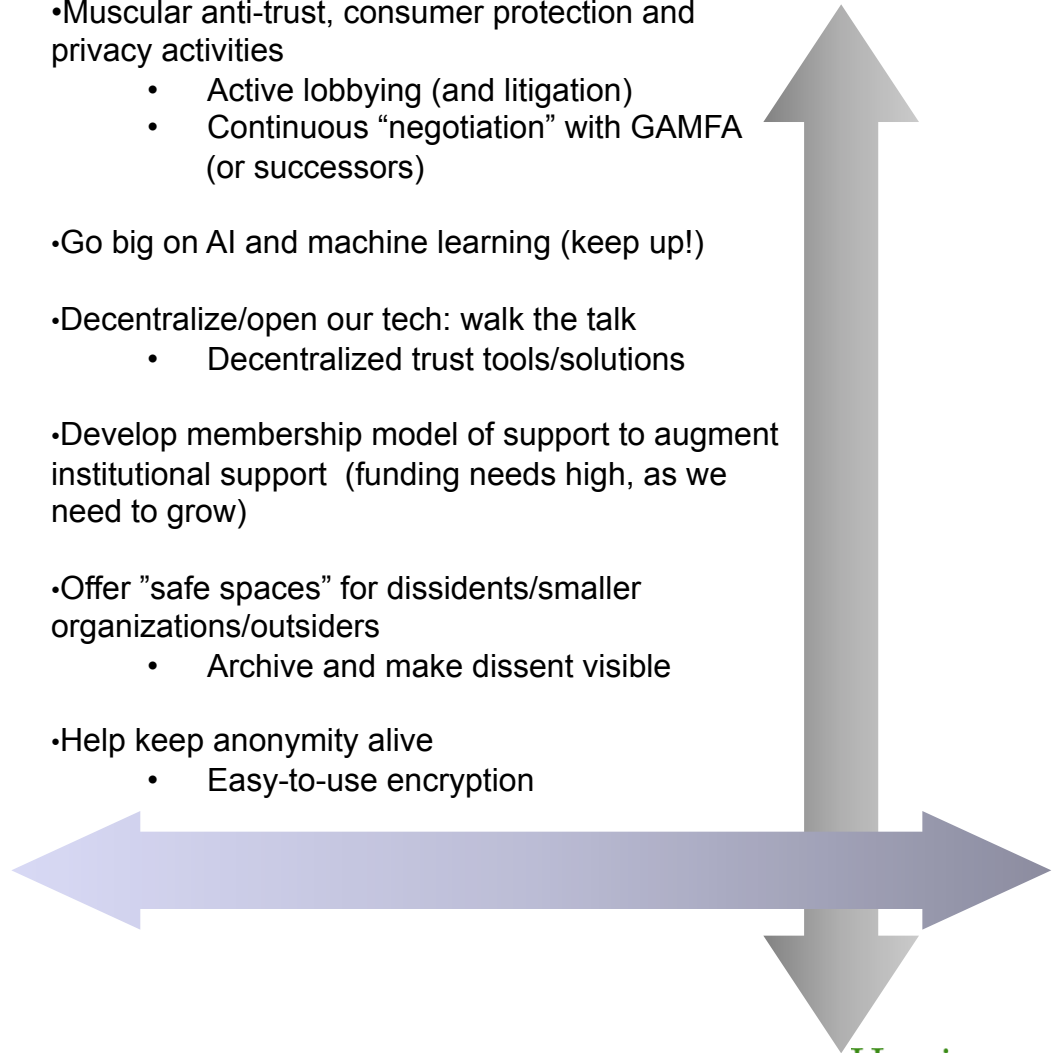
The Long and Winding Road- Some Implications

Concentrated power; confident, stable social landscape



If we knew this was the future...

- Muscular anti-trust, consumer protection and privacy activities
 - Active lobbying (and litigation)
 - Continuous “negotiation” with GAMFA (or successors)
- Go big on AI and machine learning (keep up!)
- Decentralize/open our tech: walk the talk
 - Decentralized trust tools/solutions
- Develop membership model of support to augment institutional support (funding needs high, as we need to grow)
- Offer “safe spaces” for dissidents/smaller organizations/outsideers
 - Archive and make dissent visible
- Help keep anonymity alive
 - Easy-to-use encryption

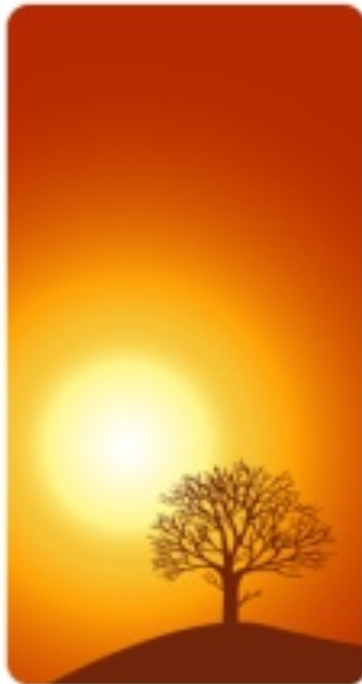


Please see the more complete list of implications available in “Notes from Session 2 of the Civil Discourse Planning Project” ...



Magical Mystery Tour

Diffuse power; confident, stable social landscape



Geo-politics are relatively peaceful, but fluid; global trade has grown; importance of the nation-state has receded

The economy is strong in the developed world; stronger (growing more quickly) in the developing

Open tech and free trade make for lots of commercial turbulence— new entrants (and sectors) consistently displacing the “old”

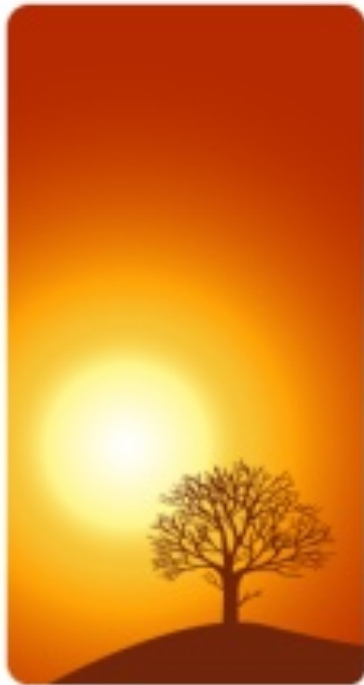
Consensus-driven government spreads... so slow in response to major challenges

Political parties fragment; social movements grow



Magical Mystery Tour

Diffuse power; confident, stable social landscape



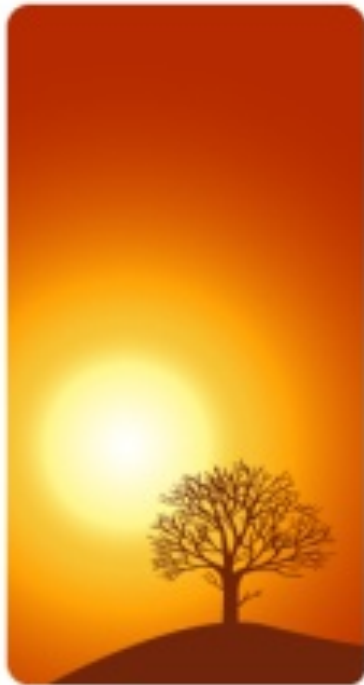
A world of possibility (Europe in the 1960s-80s... and perhaps, the world in the 00s):

- “Open” (data, science, educational resources) flourishes
- But so do fraud and privacy violations
- Individual/distributed creativity blooms– but so do big mistakes (e.g., CRISPR accidents)
- Big platforms (FB, Google) give way to decentralized web; traditional transactions, to block chain
- Society values both emergent curators of news...
- And values “experts” (helping deal with, e.g., irreversable climate change)
- But all of this change generates push-back from threatened incumbents



Magical Mystery Tour

Diffuse power; confident, stable social landscape



Some possible headlines:

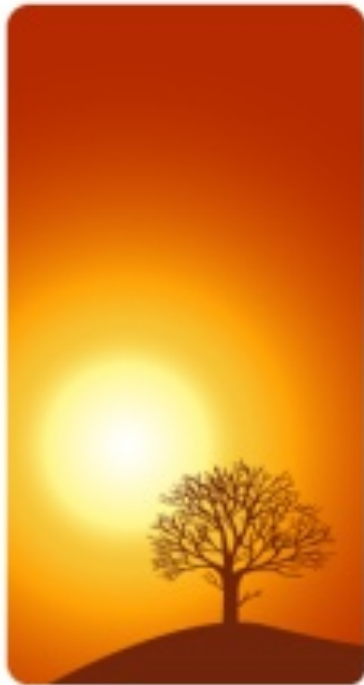
- Number of university grads at all-time low, as “skill credentials” supplant degrees
- [New cell OS] reaches 20% share
- Rents for 1-bedroom apartments hit \$10,000/mo in 5 cities
- Climate refugees growing in number
- “Cap and Trade” population control promoted
- Pension chaos: risky investments play havoc with savings
- Political parties fragment; locus of power shifts from nations toward states/cities

A much more complete description is available in "Notes from Session 2 of the Civil Discourse Planning Project" ...



Magical Mystery Tour

Diffuse power; confident, stable social landscape



Key Themes

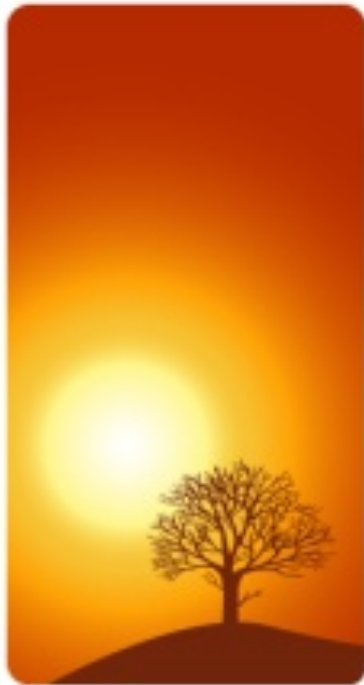
- The imperative (in this time of opportunity) is to grow, grow, grow (in order to have impact)...
- ... While changing, changing, changing (in order to stay appropriate/relevant)
- Heavy emphasis on global approaches to:
 - Tools for sharing
 - Tools for co-creating
 - Tools and approaches for helping this displaced/left behind by change
 - “Big lens” tools— helping people understand and participate effectively in the “global whole”
- Philanthropy continues/grows, and subscription/freemium opportunities emerge

A much more complete description is available in "Notes from Session 2 of the Civil Discourse Planning Project" ...



Magical Mystery Tour- Some Implications

Diffuse power; confident, stable social landscape



If you knew this was the future...

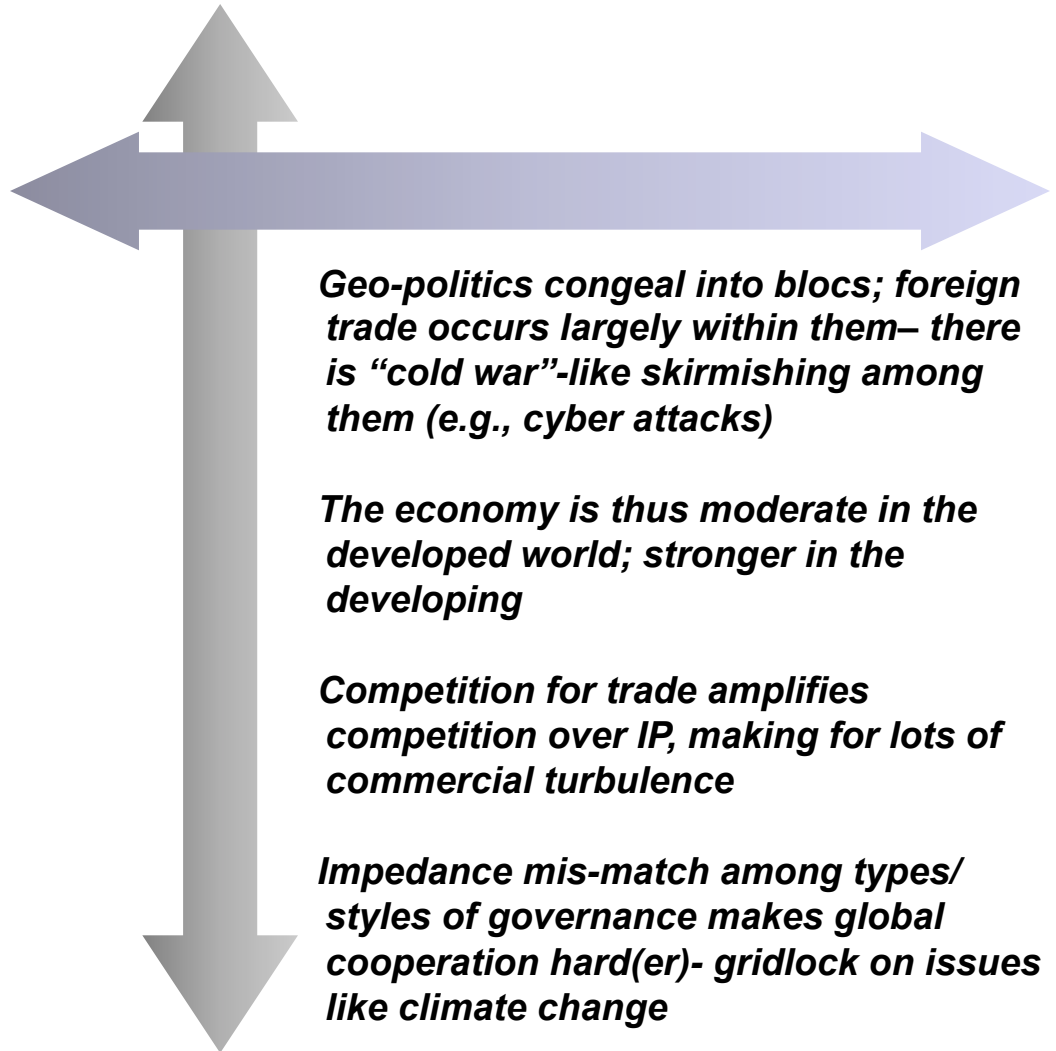
- Innovate, innovate, innovate
- 1000 Year Plan for Global Knowledge Trust
 - 1000 languages in 100 years
- Build decentralized web, built on trust
 - A “moonshot” against GAMFA?
- Tools for interpretation: system-system translation
- Design for the global poor
 - Educating about/enabling privacy
- Prepare to grow very quickly
- Augment philanthropy with subscription/freemium
- Bake diversity into everything– organization, leadership, hiring
- Invest in collaboration (with each other and other organizations)

Please see the more complete list of implications available in “Notes from Session 2 of the Civil Discourse Planning Project” ...



Maxwell's Silver Hammer

Diffuse power; fearful, unstable social landscape



Geo-politics congeal into blocs; foreign trade occurs largely within them– there is “cold war”-like skirmishing among them (e.g., cyber attacks)

The economy is thus moderate in the developed world; stronger in the developing

Competition for trade amplifies competition over IP, making for lots of commercial turbulence

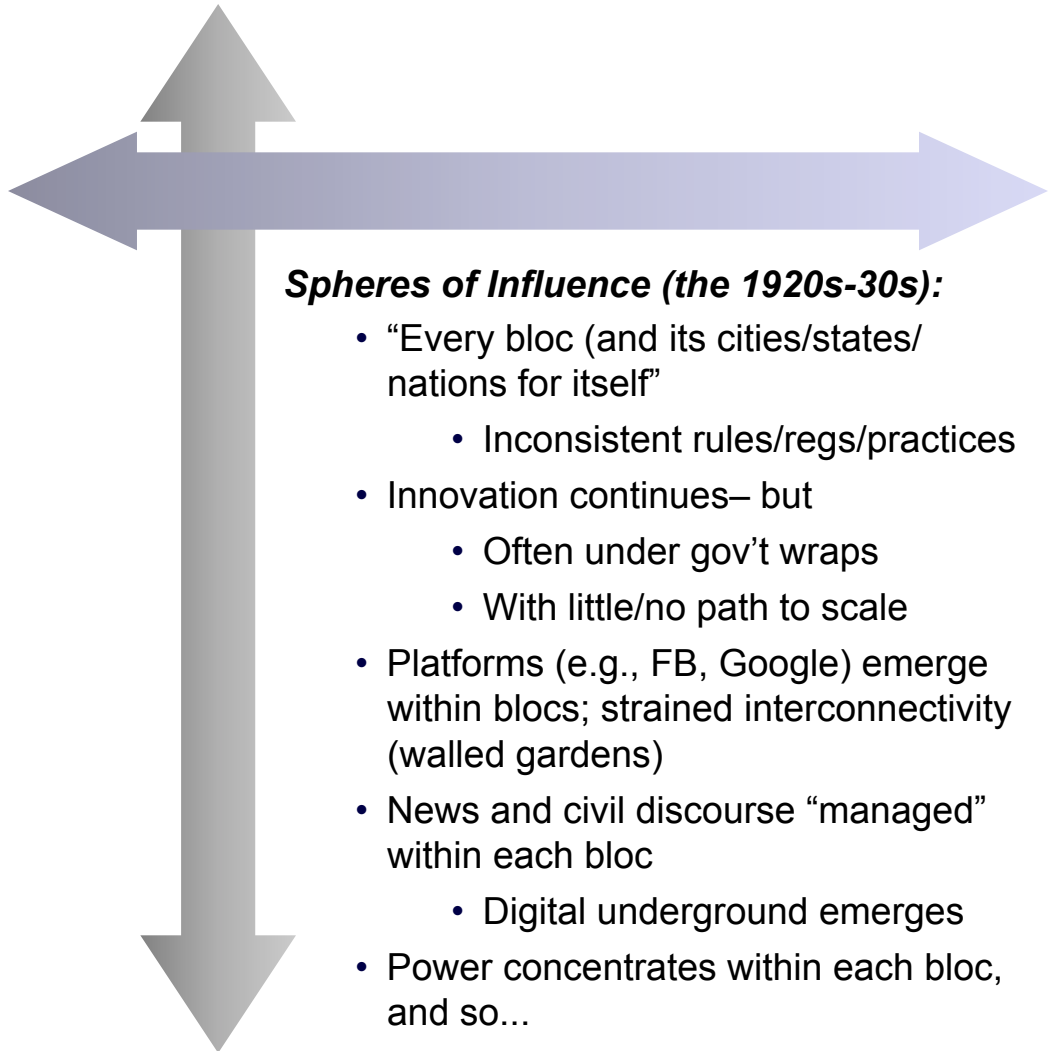
Impedance mis-match among types/ styles of governance makes global cooperation hard(er)- gridlock on issues like climate change

Increased pressure for emigration; decreased opportunity



Maxwell's Silver Hammer

Diffuse power; fearful, unstable social landscape



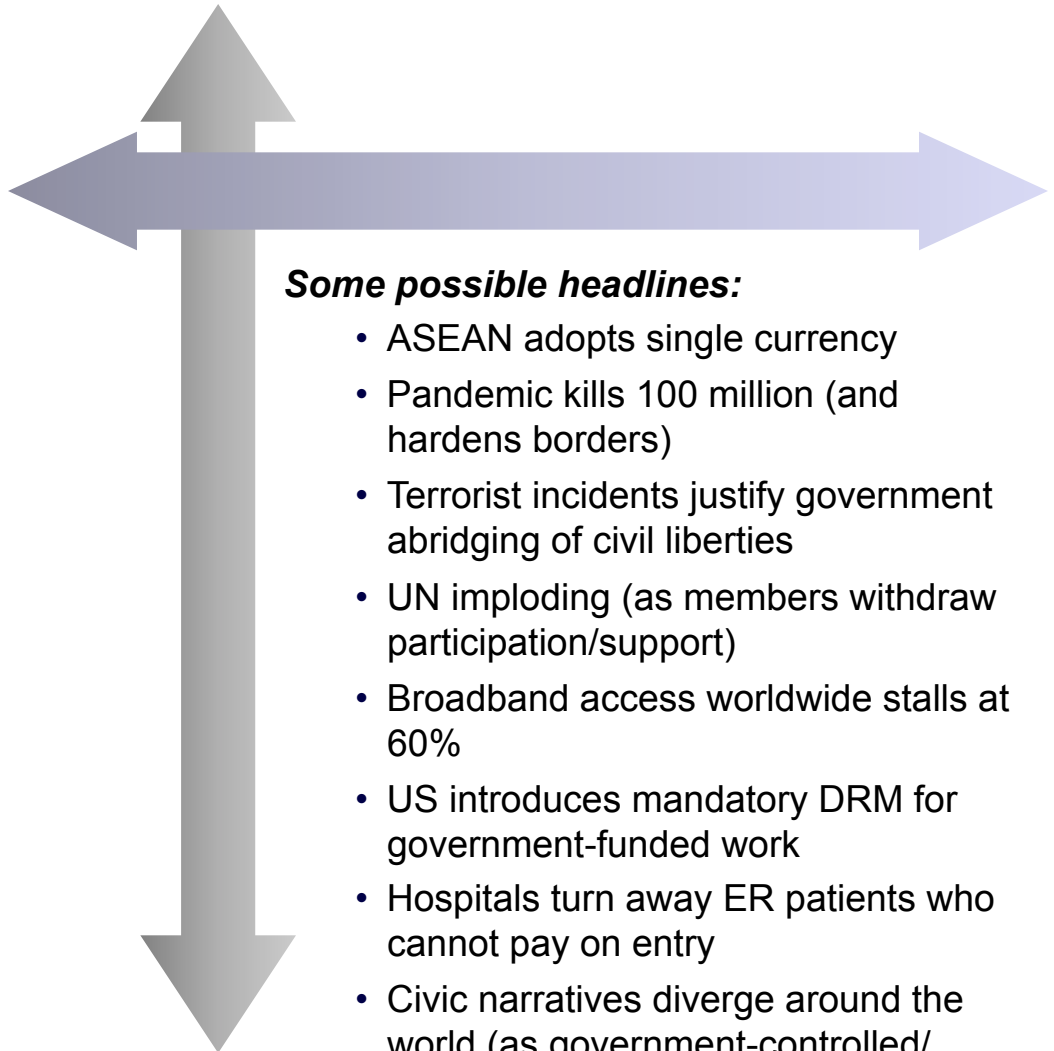
Spheres of Influence (the 1920s-30s):

- “Every bloc (and its cities/states/nations for itself”
 - Inconsistent rules/regs/practices
- Innovation continues– but
 - Often under gov’t wraps
 - With little/no path to scale
- Platforms (e.g., FB, Google) emerge within blocs; strained interconnectivity (walled gardens)
- News and civil discourse “managed” within each bloc
 - Digital underground emerges
- Power concentrates within each bloc, and so...
 - High degree of inequality
 - Terrorism, apocalyptic religions (and repressive pushback)



Maxwell's Silver Hammer

Diffuse power; fearful, unstable social landscape



Some possible headlines:

- ASEAN adopts single currency
- Pandemic kills 100 million (and hardens borders)
- Terrorist incidents justify government abridging of civil liberties
- UN imploding (as members withdraw participation/support)
- Broadband access worldwide stalls at 60%
- US introduces mandatory DRM for government-funded work
- Hospitals turn away ER patients who cannot pay on entry
- Civic narratives diverge around the world (as government-controlled/directed coverage varies)



Maxwell's Silver Hammer

Diffuse power; fearful, unstable social landscape



A much more complete description is available in "Notes from Session 2 of the Civil Discourse Planning Project" ...

Key Themes

- Services like those of our organizations are
 - More valuable than ever
 - More threatened than ever
 - And will need to be delivered in
 - More languages
 - More forms
 - With "bloc-to-bloc" translation
- Huge need for the development of systems of trust
 - Tools and techniques
 - Decentralized web (as alternative to the "official" nets in each bloc)
- Heavy reliance on philanthropic support, but also with the (potentially dangerous) possibility of government funding



Maxwell's Silver Hammer- Some Implications

Diffuse power; fearful, unstable social landscape



Please see the more complete list of implications available in "Notes from Session 2 of the Civil Discourse Planning Project" ...

If we knew this was the future...

- Preserve knowledge; be reliable source
 - Capture new knowledge
 - Archive local knowledge
- Emphasize maintenance and reliability (over innovation)
- Make tools available
 - Translation
 - Publishing
 - Courseware
 - Decentralized deliberation/ decision platforms
- Embrace blockchain
- Master community organizing
 - Build distributed communities
- Open source everything



A Hard Day's Night

Concentrated power; fearful, unstable social landscape



***Nationalism “wins” around the world;
authoritarianism is the order of the day,
and mercantilist economic policies rule.
Little global cooperation on anything.***

***The economy stagnates in both the
developed and the developing worlds***

***Competition for trade amplifies
competition over IP – both legal and
illegal (theft, reverse engineering)***

***Flow of information increasingly
“managed”/controlled by governments***

***Individuals retreat to family/tribe... and/
or resort to violence***

***...As climate change– temperature
shifts, water shortages– makes life ever
harder***



A Hard Day's Night

Concentrated power; fearful, unstable social landscape



The Post-Soviet period in the FSU (the 1990s):

- China continues to rise; the U.S, to recede; and the EU, to dis-integrate
- Tech becomes a “government tool”
- Platforms like Google (that depend on free info flow) wither; those like FB (that are happily closed) can succeed— so long as they toe the government lines
- News and civil discourse heavily “managed” within each nation
 - Digital samidzat emerges
- Power concentrates within each nation, and so...
 - High(er) degree of inequality
 - Terrorism, apocalyptic religions (and repressive pushback)



A Hard Day's Night

Concentrated power; fearful, unstable social landscape



Some possible headlines:

- Turnbull emulated (other leaders declare the “the laws of [] supersede the laws of mathematics”)
- Government crackdown on terrorism intensifies– even as its effectiveness wanes
- Government mandates “backdoors” in all end-to-end encryption
- Number of refugee camps worldwide at an all-time high– and growing.
- The “New New Cuisine”– insects, fake meat–adopted (of necessity)
- *New York Times* editor arrested for sedition
- GINI index at all time high
- “Pirate librarians” arrested for holding/ sharing samidzat material



A Hard Day's Night

Concentrated power; fearful, unstable social landscape



A much more complete description is available in "Notes from Session 2 of the Civil Discourse Planning Project" ...

Key Themes

- Services like those of our organizations are central to "the resistance"
 - Supporting (real) journalists
 - Protecting content (data/facts) and making them available
 - Finding (alternative) modes of communication (e.g., mesh net)
 - Encouraging critical thinking
- ... and it's likely to be necessary to "go underground" to provide them
- Heavy reliance on pro-bono and volunteer help, and philanthropic support (from "renegade billionaires"?)
 - May also be possible to sell "trust products" (encryption, security) in this low trust world



A Hard Day's Night- Some Implications

Concentrated power; fearful, unstable social landscape



Please see the more complete list of implications available in "Notes from Session 2 of the Civil Discourse Planning Project" ...

If we knew this was the future...

- Build info "mechanisms" people can trust
 - The web's "memory"
 - "Context engines"
 - Secure channels (whistleblowing, protest) and tools
 - Protect/preserve local knowledge/ languages
- Multi-homed operations- distributed
 - Move off of AWS
 - Encourage distributed innovation
 - Democratize culture of critical thinking
- Prepare for mobile-first
- Learn from those to whom this has already happened
- Heavy fund-raising now: preparing for the rainy days to come



Scenarios for the Future of Civil Discourse

And so, four scenarios- each plausible, each with very different implications for our sponsoring organizations.



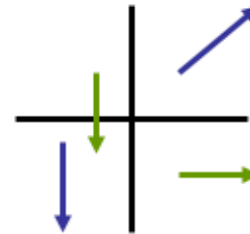


Overall Implications

Our next step was begin to surface the overall implications of the scenarios:
to parse the scenario-specific implications, identifying those that are robust
(that make sense in any scenario) and those that are contingent (the
wisdom of which depends on which way the future unfolds)...

- ***No-Brainers***
- ***No- Regrets***
- ***No-Gainers***
- ... ***To-Do***

Robust



Contingent

- Re-Frame
- “If-Then” EWS

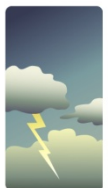
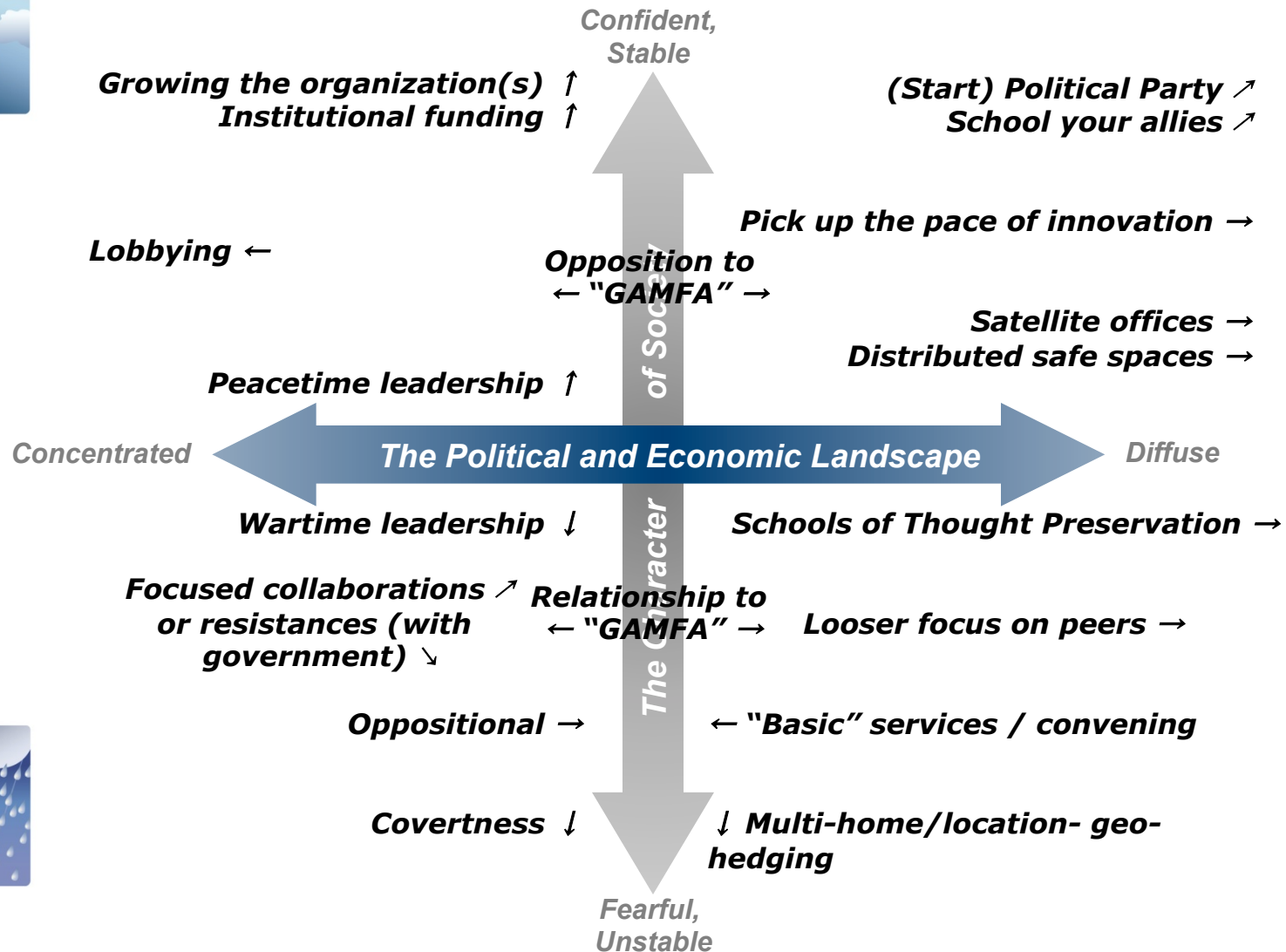


Some Robust Implications

- *Leveraging distributed communities*
- *Collaboration (defense $\longleftrightarrow$ offense, depending on whether we're West or East on our grid)*
- *Privacy self-defense*
- *Open tech*
- *Blockchain*
- *Movement building and community organizing*
- *Radical decentralization $\rightarrow$ distributed, flexible*
- *Membership $\rightarrow$ individual, small donors / more diverse geographically*
- *"De-colonize / separate from US $\rightarrow$ branding, organization*
- *Refugees $\rightarrow$ climate / political / economic*
- *Marginalized people- inclusivity initiatives*
- *Work in/archive local languages*
- *Vigilance against/response to threats to civil society*
- *Use Wikipedia edit process to archive convergence*
- *Identify and develop leaders "who are not here" / Develop new leaders*
- *Work in all media, "known and unknown"- constant innovation, incorporation of new forms*
- *AI / Machine Learning $\rightarrow$ ethics, adaptability*
- *Digital literacy $\rightarrow$ more than Facebook*
- *Basic literacy: ground everyone in what the internet is, what we do*



Some Contingent Implications





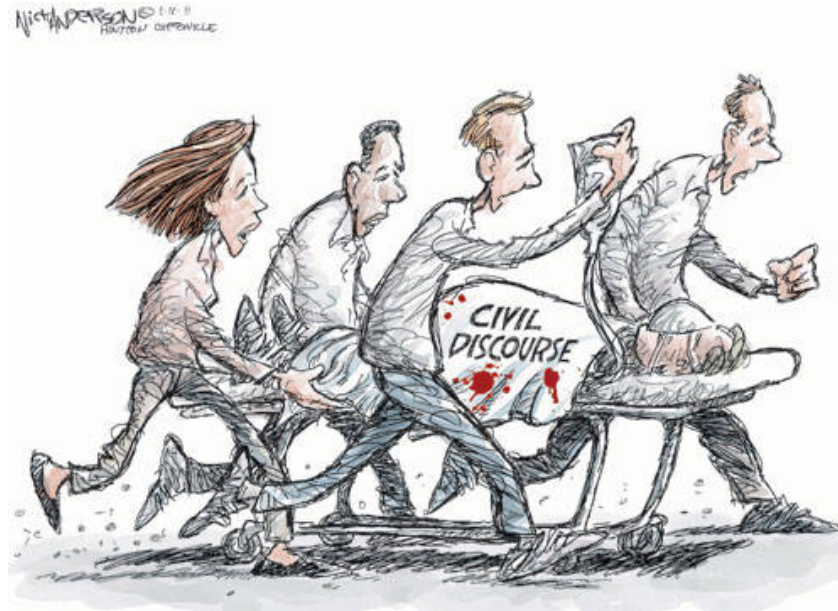
Scenarios for the Future of Civil Discourse

As noted above, the likely actual future is sure to be a mix over time of elements of each of the scenarios (with, at any point in time, different scenarios characterizing different countries/regions)– that’s to say, it’ll be a roiling mix of our futures. The purpose of the exercise is both to surface the broadest range of challenges and opportunities that each organization might face, and to provide a “wind-tunnel” for strategic options—that’s to say, we are looking out into the future in order to help make better strategic decisions today.

The next step in the process was a set of meetings with each of the sponsoring organizations, in which folks there settled on the implications most important to them, and began to translate those implications (statements of strategic importance) into initiatives (the moving parts of a strategic plan).

The final session reconvened the sponsoring organizations to discuss their results, looking for points of overlap (opportunities to collaborate) and for gaps (important implications not addressed by any of the organizations, highlighting areas in which the organizations will need to develop new strengths/skills and/or to recruit others).

APPENDIX



ABOUT SCENARIO PLANNING AND HEMINGE & CONDELL



Scenario Planning: An Introduction

The use of scenarios—telling stories about what the future might hold—is probably as old as humankind. When applied to strategic thinking, as it has been by successful organizations for the last 30+ years, a set of scenarios is a tool for ordering perceptions about alternative future environments in which today’s decisions might play out– and thus for building more robust strategies.

The scenario process plots a course between prediction (denial of uncertainty) and paralysis (too much uncertainty). The purpose is not to predict the most probable future. Instead, scenario thinking can prepare organizations and individuals to be responsive to the full range of opportunities and challenges. As a result of scenario planning, organizations create and “own” a framework and vocabulary for planning that makes for radically more effective planning and action.

Scenarios help us think more flexibly about the future, so that we can react more quickly to a changing world.

Scenarios encourage innovation and creativity by asking us to consider surprising possibilities and requiring that we think further out into the future than we normally take the time to do.

Scenarios are a risk management tool that encourages us to imagine what might happen if our expectations for the future do not come true.

Scenarios provide a framework to create alignment and help learning “stick” as it occurs.

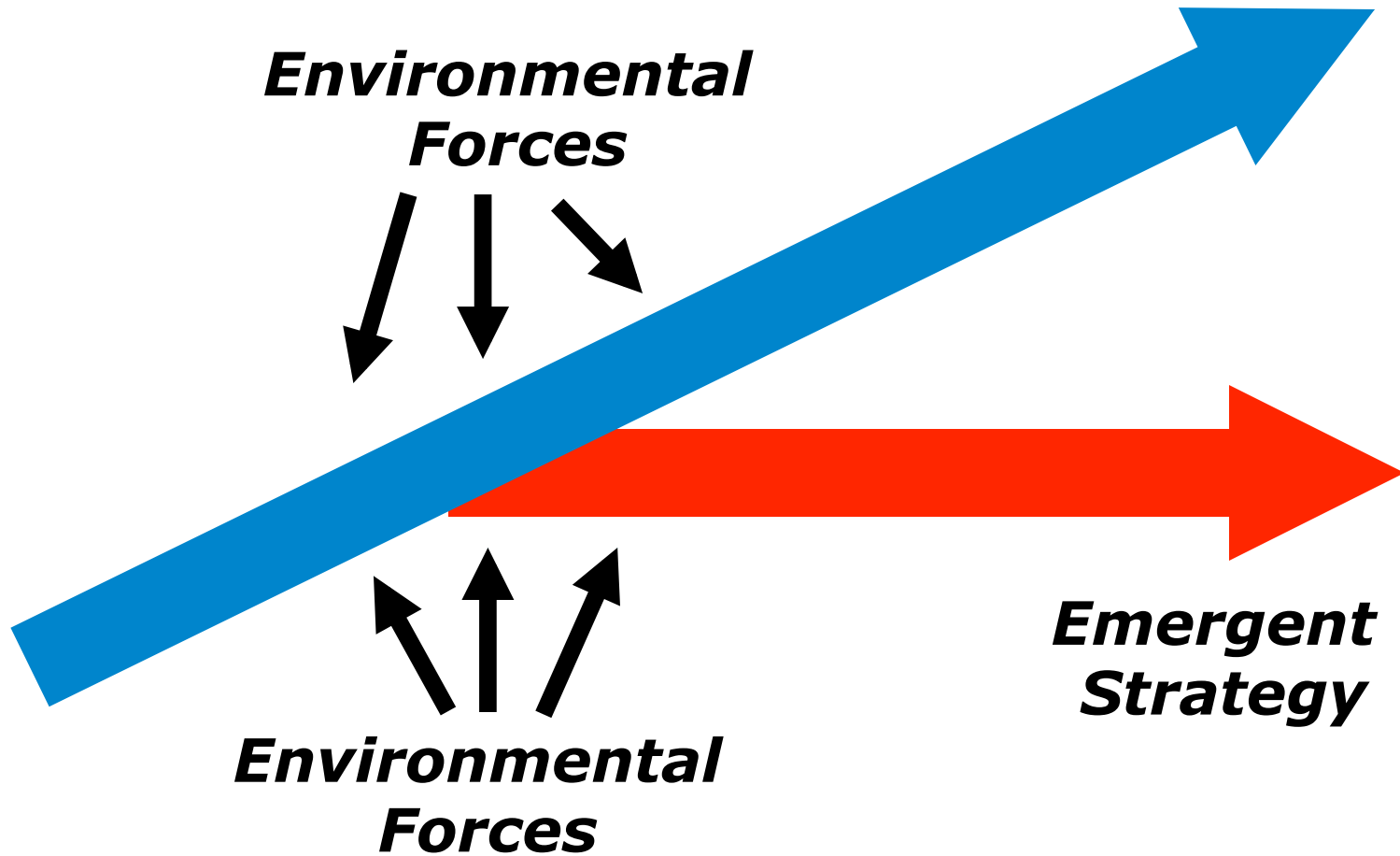
Scenarios help divergent voices-- and separate units-- come to alignment creating coordination and cross-pollination, rather than conflict.

Scenarios help us to wade through the sea of uncertainties that surround us to identify those few differences that truly make a difference.

...Once we have created a set of scenarios, we have a framework and a vocabulary for an on-going strategic conversation-- we can navigate into the future more effectively.



The Problem with Planning...



Scenarios help us manage the future that actually emerges... which is never the future that our plans anticipate



The Elements of Strategy:

Scenarios inform and illuminate traditional planning

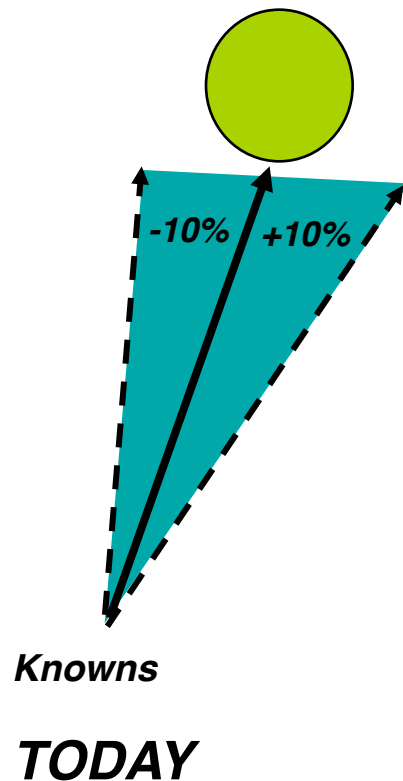


Scenarios work alongside other strategic planning techniques to assure that strategy accounts for-- and takes advantage of-- the environment in which it has to work

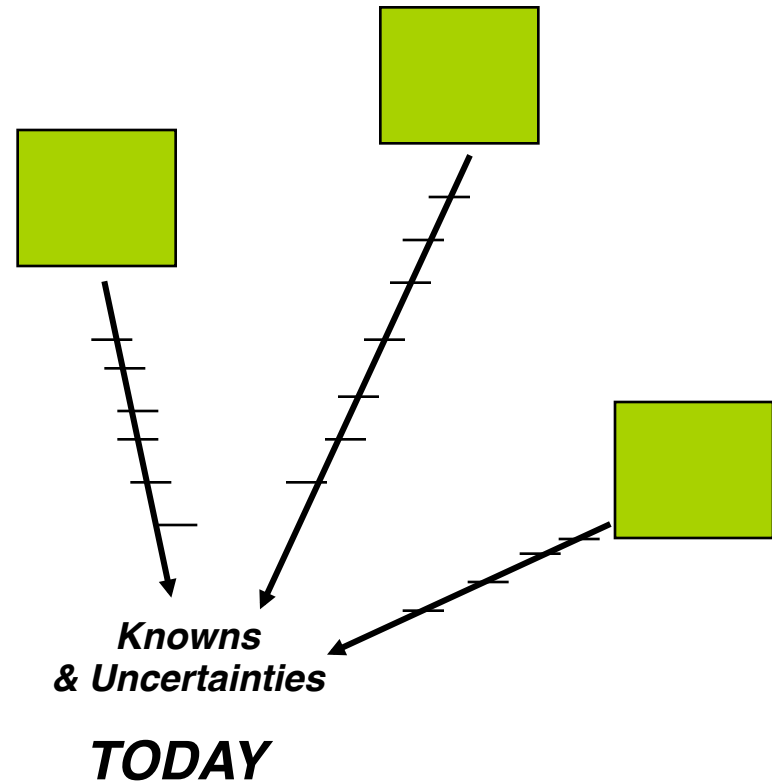


Scenarios compensate for the flaw in most forecasting: The inability to see the ways in which the future may not be an extension of the present...

***Forecast Planning
Planning for One Future***



***Scenario Planning
Planning for Any Future***





Some Major Applications of Scenarios

Strategy

- Creating / refining vision
- Framing strategic issues and defining strategic imperatives
- Reaching a decision on a specific strategic issue or question
- “Wind-tunnelling” strategy– testing against possible futures
- Creating a framework and vocabulary for ongoing strategic conversation

Innovation

- Identifying new products, services, and white-space opportunities

Investment

- Identifying opportune sectors, categories, targets
- Vetting investments, portfolios, approaches

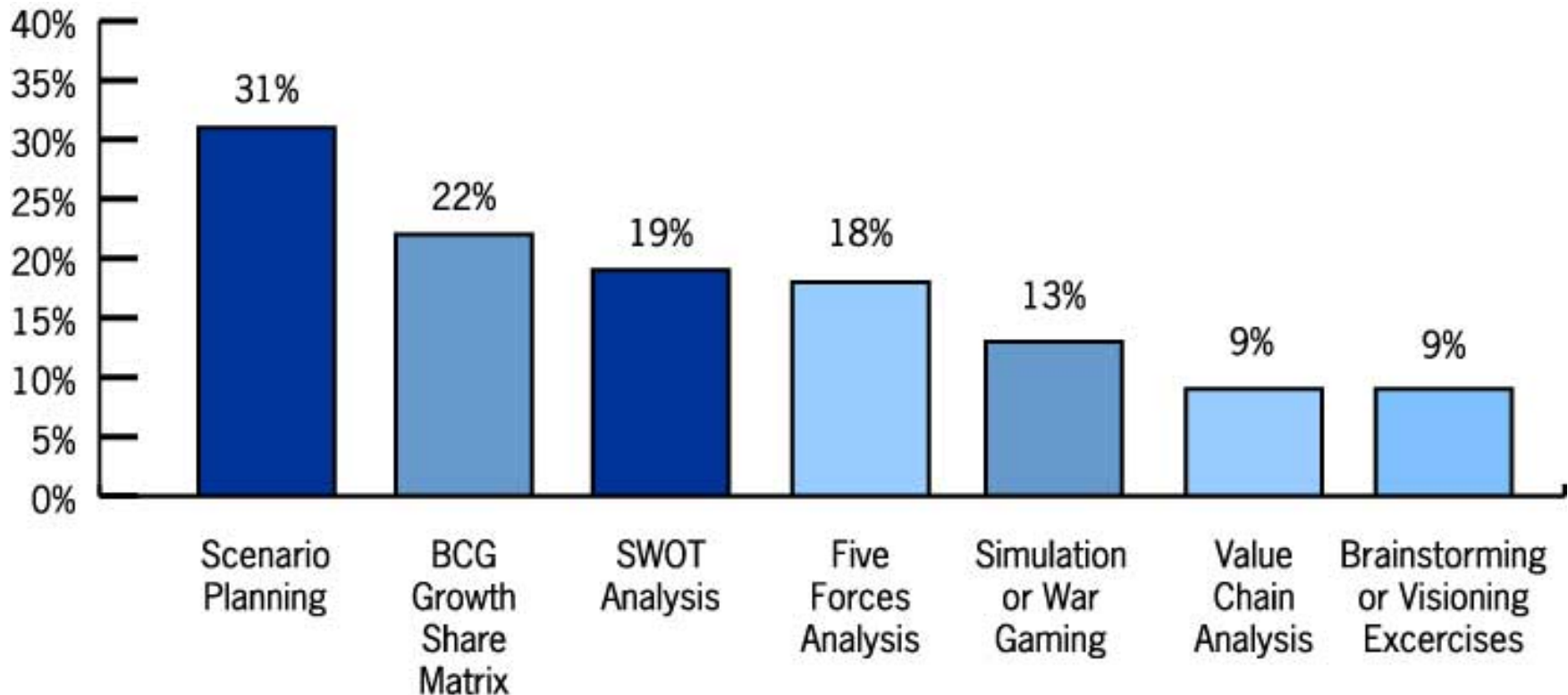
Thought Leadership

- Convening a group of clients / constituents to create a shared framework-- a map of the future-- that can then be used more effectively to market to and serve those clients and / or to reach deals or agreements



Scenario thinking has become an important tool for corporate strategy

Most Commonly Cited Strategy Tools



*Source: Corporate Strategy Board Member Survey
Corporate Strategy Board analysis*



Scenarios are *not* predictions

Scenarios are important for the conversations they spark and the decisions they inform.

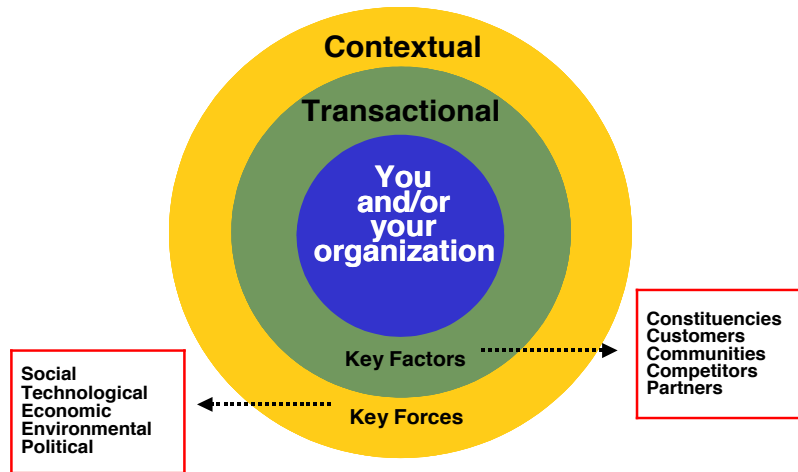
“The task is not so much to see what no one yet has seen, but to think what nobody has yet thought about that which everyone sees.”

- Schopenhauer



How are scenarios created?

Scenario thinking is a rigorous process of envisioning multiple plausible futures in order to improve the quality of today's decisions and strategies. The fundamental approach is "outside-in" thinking. Most individuals and organizations are surprised by discontinuous events because they spend their time thinking about the areas over which they have the most control and with which, the most comfort: their own field or organization. They think from the inside—the things they can control—out to the world they would like to shape. Outside-in thinking starts with understanding the external dynamics and environmental factors and drivers that may affect your work in expected and unexpected ways. It allows for strategies to emerge that might not have been visible if one only looked for the world one would like to create. Here's a picture of "outside-in" thinking:



Doing outside-in thinking by using scenarios usually begins by framing the decision to be made or the issue to be explored. Sometimes, scenario projects are very specific and ask questions such as "Should we make this acquisition?" or "Should we enter this market?" Sometimes issues are more general, such as the many projects we have done exploring the changing nature of a company's market, or the one recently completed for a major media organization: "where might the opportunities be for a content a decade from now, and how do we capitalize on them?"

The process then identifies driving forces, including social, economic, political, and technological factors-- pre-determined elements, such as demographic patterns already in the pipeline; and critical uncertainties, unpredictable dynamics such as public opinion or the state of the economy. These are then prioritized according to both importance and uncertainty.

These exercises usually culminate in three to four carefully constructed scenarios—a small number because only a few scenarios can be fully developed and remembered. Each represents a plausible alternative future-- not a best case, worst case, and "most likely" continuum. The test of a good scenario is not whether it portrays the future accurately, but whether it enables an organization to learn, adapt, and make better decisions.

Once the scenarios have been fleshed out and woven into a narrative, the next step is to identify their implications for the organization and its focal question. This can take a number of forms depending on the needs of the organization. In some cases, the scenarios are used to guide a specific decision, while in other settings they are used to generate ideas, frame new areas for exploration, or accelerate organizational learning.



Background

Heminge & Condell provides corporate strategic counsel and venture design services to corporations, not-for-profit institutions, and governments worldwide. H&C serves a broad and varied range of organizations on specific assignments, and is involved in on-going ways through its Chairman, Lawrence Wilkinson, with a group of companies and not-for-profits that he has helped create. H&C's principals have expertise earned through over 50 years of combined experience in strategic and entrepreneurial work in the worldwide. H&C also draws on a network of distinguished thinkers, managers, entrepreneurs, and designers. H&C was named for the Seventeenth Century publishers of Shakespeare's First Folio.

Lawrence Wilkinson is Chairman of Heminge & Condell (H&C), and Co-Founder of Global Business Network (GBN), and a pioneer in the development and application of scenario planning. Through H&C, Lawrence is involved in venture formation work, and as a director and counselor to a number of companies that he helped create. At the same time,, Lawrence continues to offer strategic counsel to a number of corporate clients NGOs, and governments around the world. Named a "Jedi Knight of Innovation" by Fast Company, Lawrence is a widely consulted and cited authority on strategic issues, and is active in a number of not-for-profit organizations.

His clients have included IBM, Intel, Accenture, UPS, the Walt Disney Co., NBC-Universal, Pixar, Pearson, Wiley, BBC, EA, Google, The Capital Group/AFD, PharmaFutures, GE, Ford Motor Company, Apple, Microsoft, Proctor & Gamble, HEB, ATT, The Coca-Cola Co., Ford, British Telecom, Carnegie Science, American Geophysical Union, Oxford University, Harvard University, Harvard Libraries, The Bodleian Library, the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, The World Trade Organization, and the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, Singapore, and Mongolia. (A more complete list of clients at www.HemingeAndCondell.com)

Lawrence co-founded GBN in 1987, and served as its President through 1998. GBN was central to the development and spread of the Scenario Planning technique, an approach to addressing very large decisions and long time horizons that has become a critical component of organizational and project planning worldwide.

Lawrence served as Vice-Chairman of Oxygen Media, Inc., a cable television programming service that he co-founded in June of 1998 with partners including Geraldine Laybourne, Oprah Winfrey, Carsey-Werner, and Disney, providing a cable television service reaching over 80 million households in the U.S. and award-winning web services www.oxygen.com and www.oprah.com. He co-conceived the company, and led Oxygen's planning and formation. Lawrence also helped form, then served as Director and Chief Architect of Wired Ventures, the partnership that built and managed Wired Magazine, Wired Digital/HotWired, and other ventures. And he helped form and served as a director, of Design Within Reach, Colossal Pictures, Broderbund Software, Public Bikes, Particle Therapeutics, and a number of other companies.

Lawrence has authored and edited numerous publications and Harvard Business School case studies ranging from Public Broadcasting in the U.S. (Harvard Business School Press) to The Cambridge Milton (Cambridge University Press). He is the author of How To Build Scenarios (Wired, 1995) and of The Future of Shopping (forthcoming). He has produced and executive-produced numerous television programs, multimedia titles, and feature films, including the award-winning Crumb (Sony Pictures Classics). He also has contributed regularly to general and business periodicals and national television, cable, and radio business news programs, including Wired, Backstage, Business Times, Nightly Business Report, and The Wall Street Journal Report. His articles and essays have been anthologized in a number of collections, most recently in Strategy Bites Back (edited by Henry Mintzberg, et al., Pearson/Prentice-Hall). Lawrence is a frequent speaker at business and industry meetings, has taught on the faculties of The World Economic Forum's annual Davos Summit, the Microsoft CEO Summit, the Salzburg Global Seminar, and at various business and graduate schools. He has served as a McKinsey Prize judge, and chairs the board of The Institute for the Future.

Lawrence graduated with honors from Harvard Business School, Oxford University, and Davidson College.